



NATIONAL

CREDIT AND CHARACTER.

THIS country will more and more experience the good effects of the steadiness, wisdom, and energy of her general government. The ability of America is now consolidated in an approved and adequate system, which will give consequence abroad and assure harmony and protection at home; whereas a number of little sovereignties were rather threatening perpetual discord, with insecurity, and every effect opposed to the good sought by men in forming governments, for the protection of their persons, and of the wages of their labour and care, against bad people at home and enemies abroad.

UNDER this efficacious, mild, and free government, over an extensive and fine country, we have now before us a report of the price of her freedom, and of the means for satisfying her creditors; which is nervous, clear, and promising, as it also is honorable to the abilities and integrity of the Secretary of her Treasury. It offers nought to inthral its honest purpose of performing what this people nationally promised they would perform, and for which they have a consideration; though indeed in national engagements a consideration, or value received, is not necessary to give validity to them. What, between man and man, would be *nudum pactum*,

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pactum, is not considered as such respecting a government or state. A national promise requires the most ready and complete performance, in all cases, and will not admit of circumlocution or modification, however smooth the pretence. Governments suspected to be capable of committing a breach of faith in trimming their engagements, whatever be the plausible advantages proposed, will be in low credit; and, when trusted, must pay a premium, in a high interest, for estimated risks.

A FULL unequivocal *performance* of engagements, in every iota, stamping a character of inflexible integrity in the sovereign authority of a nation, will communicate to such nation the highest credit and respect with the attendants national health and ability: whereas, nations deficient therein, will want, will be weak, will be deranged—will be necessitous, and must pay at dear and ruinous rates. It is *opinion*, alone, of this invincible integrity in a sovereign power, that commands the loans and the confidence of individuals and nations upon the cheapest and best terms: but to obtain or preserve this *opinion* every step, every word, every thought of sovereigns, respecting their engagements, must be unequivocal, and with assurance that “though they promise to their loss, they will make their promise good.”

SOVEREIGNS cannot be sued; because they are not amenable in their own or other national courts: therefore, if they trifle in performing their engagements, or but presume to hint that they *can* alter them in a tittle, *distrust* is awakened, and becomes alert: the consequence whereof is, the nation sinks
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in her character, credit, and power, in proportion to the degree of distrust,—and where will distrust, or a dread of loss founded on apprehensions of insincerity or ignorance in supremacy*—where will it end! Even in the course of enacting laws on other common occasions, a weakness appearing in them cheapens a legislature, in the judgment of the world, and lessens energy in the government; for it lessens *opinion* of the abilities of her public men; which mars confidence in the government tinged with ignorance or affected with caprice: this assuredly is a sink to public credit.

INDIVIDUALS

* The sovereign power of a nation, which, to use a familiar expression, is not comatable—not compellable in these cases, as individuals are. Governments are so far omnipotent.—History abounds with instances of *ignorance* in supremacy. To the account of *ignorance*, is chargeable the general depravity of Europe, for most if not all of the centuries of the christian era, which have preceded the present; and it was the *ignorance* of *sovereigns* and of *legislators*. It led them to believe that their safety, their grandeur, and their happiness depended on their brutalizing the people, who were under their subjection. They did brutalize, they swaggered in diabolical wantonness, and they dogmatized: but apprehension of assassination or of deprivation was continually grating their minds. The people were wretched—the sovereign more wretched—all were *ignorant*; and it was an arcanum of those who could read, to prevent others from learning to read: the body of the people were to be kept in ignorance, surpassing the ignorance of their feudal sovereigns—but clerks read, and clerks read for their own purposes.—It was the art of printing which became the great instrument in diffusing *knowledge*, as it arose in the minds of a few people of wisdom and goodness, and was by them communicated

INDIVIDUALS perform their contracts from honest principle, or to support character for future advantages, or to avoid compulsion, with cost and shame, in the courts of justice: governments are quickened in the performance of theirs to promote their credit and character; without which their consequence and power are contemptible. On national *character* depends all *credit*—all *power*—and all *public happiness*.—In a word, *integrity* united with *wisdom*, is the essential,—the *sine qua non* of the independence and happiness of nations.

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communicated to the world through that noble instrument. The press has nearly annihilated tyranny, in diffusing *knowledge* to the world, and warning wisdom of her danger from the wicked. It is to be lamented, however, that this noble friend of mankind should ever have been perverted to become the instrument of incendiaries—or of malicious slanderers. Whilst it is free to communicate intelligence of a public nature, common sense—humanity—the sweets of social happiness—and a consciousness of its own dignity and office, will forbid its degenerating into a vehicle of chit-chat abuse and scandal of individuals in private life, or of malignancy towards the government of the country. Freedom of communication concerning public affairs, will be expected from it,—it will be sought for by the people, whilst it speaks to the *understanding*: but attempts to impose ribaldry on them, would disgust their good sense, as being foreign to any good purpose, and affrontive to their understandings.